REMARKS

Claims 1-12 were originally in the application and have been rejected by the Examiner. Claim 1 has been amended to more particularly point out Applicants' invention and Claims 6-12 have been cancelled. New Claims 13-18 directed to an extrusion coating process have been added.

Claim 1 now specifically defines Applicants' invention as extrusion coatings consistent with the specification (see page 2, line 30; page 3, line 10; page 4, lines 4 and 16; and the paragraph bridging pages 4-5). Furthermore, the extrusion coatings are now defined as having melt indexes (MIs) from 7 to 35 g/10 min and vinyl acetate contents from 15 to 28 wt.%. The MI and vinyl acetate (VA) contents were recited in previous dependent Claims 6-12 which are now cancelled.

Applicants' have also now included Claims 13-18 directed to a process for producing extrusion coated articles using the improved extrusion coating compositions of the invention. Support for the process claims is provided in the specification at page 5, line 15, to page 6, line 3, and in the examples provided on pages 6-10 of the application.

The rejection of the claims under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Widiger, et al., patent (US 4,247,584) is respectfully traversed and reconsideration requested. Applicants have acknowledged in their discussion of the prior art that blends of two different ethylene-vinyl acetates (EVA) are known for the production of films. This is not, however, suggestive of extrusion coatings comprised of a mixture of EVAs having substantially different VA contents and MIs.

Applicants take strong exception to the Examiner's conclusion of obviousness on the grounds that the claimed MIs "are within the purview of the reference based on individual MI of the components and their respective amount." While no MI limits are specified for the blends broadly disclosed at Column 3, lines 5-21, of the reference, the skilled artisan would necessarily conclude the MIs of Widiger's, et al., blends must be

within, or substantially within, the range specified at Column 3, line 32, based on the disclosed application, i.e., production of heat-shrinkable films, and other statements in the reference pointing out the disadvantages associated with the use of blends having increased MIs. Widiger, et al., at Column 7, lines 11-13, unequivocally state that less beneficial results are observed using relatively higher MI blends – in this case a blend having an MI of 0.66 compared to blends having MIs ranging from 0.35 to 0.45. Clearly, such statements by Widiger, et al., would lead the skilled artisan away from the use of high MI blends and Applicants' extrusion coating blends would not be obvious therefrom.

Where a reference suggests a poor result would be obtained with the products of the claimed invention, it discourages research in the very field to which the invention pertains. To discover highly useful high VA content, high MI products in the face of the Widiger, et al., disclosure suggesting unacceptable results is the antithesis of obviousness.

The rejection of the claims under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Georgelos, et al., patent (US 5,635,261) is also respectfully traversed and reconsideration requested. Georgelos, et al., also relates to the production of films and while EVA blends are disclosed for the heat seal layer the blends, by virtue of their application, would not render Applicants' instantly claimed extrusion coating blends obvious to one skilled in the art. While VA contents of the Georgelos, et al., EVA blend components may overlap and could possibly encompass Applicants' copolymers, the MIs of the Georgelos, et al., blends are necessarily low and, as such, would not render Applicants' instantly claimed extrusion coatings obvious to one skilled in the art. The major blend constituent of the Georgelos, et al., blends has an MI of 0.2 to 0.7 so that even if the MI of the minor constituent was 10 (the upper MI limit provided for by Georgelos, et al.) the MI of the resulting blend could not be within the MI range required for Applicants' extrusion coatings.

The teachings of both Widiger, et al., and Georgelos, et al., are directed to the production of films. As such, the MI requirements of any EVA blends utilized therefore must be consistent therewith and those skilled in the art would immediately recognize

this requires the use of blends typically having fractional MIs, i.e., MIs less than 1. This is born out by the examples of both Widiger, et al., and Georgelos, et al. Accordingly, in the absence of an express teaching or even the remotest suggestion in the references to the use of EVA blends for extrusion coating Applicants' instantly claimed invention would not be obvious to one skilled in the art.

The fact a claimed product is within the broad field of the prior art and one might arrive at it by selecting specific parameters does not render the product obvious in the absence of some directions or reasons for making such selection. Withdrawal of the rejections based on Widiger, et al., and Georgelos, et al., is accordingly requested.

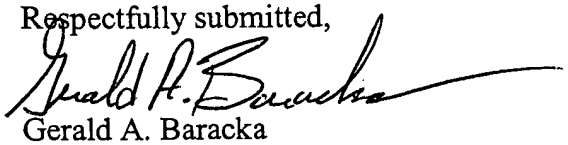
As to the improved results obtained with Applicants' instantly claimed blends, Applicants submit the entire thrust of their invention is the ability to achieve improved results over that obtained using either component individually. As such, the best comparison is necessarily a comparison against those individual components. How else could Applicants' substantiate their claim of improved result? Applicants submit this is the only fair comparison and it is not necessary to demonstrate the unexpected properties are attributable to the claimed characteristics of either EVA component.

The object of the invention is to produce extrusion coating blends having higher seal strengths at lower heat seal temperatures and, in some instances, higher ultimate seal strengths than is possible using either of the blend components individually. Applicants' comparative data as set forth in Tables 1 and 2 of the application clearly demonstrate this unobvious and unexpected result.

In view of the showings made and since the individual EVA components used to prepare all of the Applicants' blends as well as the blends themselves possess the claimed characteristics, no additional data regarding unexpected properties attributed to the claimed characteristics of the components should be required.

In view of the foregoing remarks and amendments to the claims, it is Applicants' belief the claims are allowable and favorable action is requested. Should the Examiner wish to discuss the foregoing or any matter of form in an effort to advance the application toward allowance, she is urged to telephone the undersigned at the indicated number.

Respectfully submitted,



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